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DEVOTED TO THE PROPAGANDA OF FREEDOM

Religion

(By Mrs. I. J. Fykes.)

I hear grim Faith's hierophant
Religion's varied praises chant;
I see him crown her with a crown
Of priceless worth of great renown.

"She changed to soul what was a clod,
She led the man-brute up to god;
Assured the reign of charity
And founded human sympathy;
With flowers crowned the brow of Peace.
To Justice granted fair increase;
Curbed the brute passions of the strong
And bade Truth triumph, vanquished Wrong!
Made man's soul, groveling in the mire,
Unto the stars of heaven aspire;
Gave him the dream of brotherhood,
Exalted Virtue, knighted Good.
Brought forth from out the darkness dense
The holy laws men reverence—
God's shining rays that light our way
And leads us to his perfect day.

"Religion Knowledge consecrates;
Upon the steps of god she waits
And gives to childhood dignity—
Abolishing Fear's sovereignty,
The dreadful curse of slavery!

"She leads to progress, leads to light;
Her word dissolves man's moral right!
Fair Science waits upon her e'er,
The torch of wisdom doth she bear,
The garb of heaven-born hopes doth wear!

"Faith weak hath made the savage heart,
Caused man to choose the better part,
Hath sheathed the bloody sword, that brand
Hurling from Massacre's dread hand.
Hath set, with her white-handed train,
Fair Peace o'er humankind to reign!
Calling from tyranny's miry sod
White flowers up with praise for god.
She takes the sting away from Death,
The venom draws from Evil's breath!

"Opposing wrong, upholding right,
Divine of birth, girt with god's might,
She stands—god's fairest gift to earth!
Teaching to man his moral worth,
Teaching him that he hath a soul,
Teaching respect and self control!

"Crowned with white lilies, chastely gowned,
In her all gifts of grace abound.
The teacher and the guardian she
Of sin-pursued humanity.
Through her god's stars alone we see.
For she is truth and she is love
And she is mercy from above!
Peace, virtue, charity—all good
Hath flowed from her, is understood
In her divine, her beauteous name.
She is god's purifying flame!"

Thus runs the shining praise of him
Who would religion's beauties limn
On ground of gold in rainbow hues.
But others are who dare accuse
His goddess of all wanton wiles.
And see in her the wicked smiles
Of rampart evil—breeding death
And mischief with her lying breath.

A stumbling block to progress, she
Held reason in captivity.
Nay, made of it a crime 'gainst god!
And smote fair Science with her rod.
Justice by her was long betrayed,
Faction 'gainst faction she arrayed
And blind belief did cultivate
Till man in mental darkness sate
Until he groveled, as she bade,
Before a god whom Fear had made.

What hath religion done for man?
She truly outlines god's great plan?
From the beginning sin and shame,
Benighted ignorance, made her name
Their own. Her origin was base
What would we see if we should trace
Her foul career, unveil her face?
Not the chaste stars, the lilies white,
The glories of the infinite,—
Nay evil's festering, cankering blight!

Cruelty, ignorance, vice—with these
The spirits needs she would appease!
From the beginning faith and blood
In horrid unity have stood.
She was no cresset but a rod!
Disfiguring and maligning god
She chained the soul, kept man a clod.

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